

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /062 W

----- 029900

R 211500Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 153

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 8837

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CG, PGOV

SUBJECT: RUMORS OF GOVERNMENTAL SHAKE-UP

REF: KINSHASA 8836 (NOTAL)

1. PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE FOR SWITZERLAND (REFTEL) HAS FED RUMORS OF GOVERNMENTAL SHAKE-UP SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH CIRCULATED AT TIME OF MOBUTU'S EUROPEAN VOYAGE EARLIER THIS YEAR. BELIEF IS WIDESPREAD IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES THAT MOBUTU INTENDED TO ANNOUNCE SWEEPING CHANGES AT MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SCHEDULED FOR YESTERDAY, OCTOBER 20. LAST-MINUTE CANCELLATION OF MEETING NOW RUMORED TO REFLECT CONTINUED JOCKEYING FOR POSITION BY THREATENED OFFICIALS.

2. SEVERAL ZAIRIAN OFFICIALS HAVE SHARED WITH EMBASSY IN RECENT MONTHS THEIR BELIEF THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE PRIME MINISTER IS A PREREQUISITE FOR THE SUCCESS OF ECONOMIC REFORMS. WE WERE ALSO TOLD BY A MEMBER OF PRESIDENT'S ENTOURAGE THAT HE WAS ASSURED BY MOBUTU'S ELDEST SON DURING THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT VISIT TO SOUTHERN AFRICA, THAT "IMPORTANT CHANGES" WOULD BE ANNOUNCED SHORTLY. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE CLOSE TO UNTZA SECRETARY GENERAL KIKONGI, MOBUTU WAS EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE YESTERDAY THE:

- DESIGNATION OF FORMIN NGUZA AS PRIME MINISTER;
- THE REPLACEMENT OF BISENGIMANA BY NAMWISI, FORMER MINISTER

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OF NATIONAL ECONOMY;

-- RETIREMENT OF GENERAL BUMBA, WHO HAS CONFIDED TO FRIENDS OF ABOVE SOURCE HIS CONCERN OVER THE DETERIORATION OF HIS RELATIONS WITH MOBUTU DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS.

3. WHAT HAPPENED IN FACT, AFTER CANCELLATION OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING, WAS THAT MOBUTU CALLED NGUZA AND GAVE HIM INSTRUCTIONS TO PASS ON TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AS GUIDELINES FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL DURING HIS ABSENCE. ILEO ALSO CALLED IN AND GIVEN SIMILAR GUIDANCE TO PASS ON TO THE POLITICAL BUREAU. THESE MOVES WILL FEED THE RUMOR MILL, WITH PARTISANS OF THE PRIME MINISTER OPTION SEEING A PRECURSOR OF NGUZA'S RISING STAR, WHILE OTHERS WILL SAY THAT THE LATEST MOVES PROVE THAT MOBUTU IS NOT PREPARED TO HAND OVER AUTHORITY IN ANY FORMAL WAY. IN A WORD, MOBUTU'S ABILITY TO KEEP HIS ELITES OFF BALANCE REMAINS INTACT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, MEDICAL CARE, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976KINSHA08837
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760396-0085
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761030/aaaaayza.tel
Line Count: 76
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 KINSHASA 8836
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <04 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RUMORS OF GOVERNMENTAL SHAKE-UP
TAGS: PGOV, OVIP, CG, SZ, (MOBUTU SESE SEKO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006